ANARCHISTS' NEW PLAN

Ferrer School System Allows Pupils to Do as They Please and Learn What They Want to Know—How It Is Being Carried Out in New York

IF you took your little daughter on your knee and told her of a school at which she might arrive at any hour and depart when she pleased, a school at which she didn't have to learn to spell, and at which grammar was not taught, she would probably suspect you of fairy tale tendencies.

If you continued and informed her that there were no classes and that she could stand up whenever she wanted to or sit down whenever she preferred; that she could shriek triumphantly across the class room to any little boy or girl at any preferred time; that she could go to play at any time without the suggestion of disapproval from a teacher, who wouldn't punish her if she asked him to; and that she took history and botany and geography and physiology, and almost everything else you could think of—together, there would be a strong probability t at her confidence in your integrity would weaken. She wouldn't believe that such a heaven could exist; she dec dedly would refuse to believe that it existed in New York, and that she could attend it if she had a mind to

And yet it does exist, no fur!her away than Twelfth street, if you call that far; between Third and Fourth avenues, to be spec fic. There stands possibly the strangest school in the world—a school of the upside down, where nothing is done in the manner in which it is done anywhere else, where you can go down the catalogue from "no spelling" to "no punishment" and find everything as t has been stated—a school, moreover, which is possibly the only school anywhere whose pupils make a constant practice of coming too early and of insisting upon going late. An (whisper it) anarchist school, where education is achieved almost solely through the asking of questions, and where even the mysteries of the processes of birth are not held back from any infant that likes to ask about them.

The Ferrer Modern School—for such is its title—achieved its birth less than

THE FERTILIZATION OF THE "WHY"

a year ago, the result of a complicated sentiment aroused at the execution of Francisco Ferrer, the Spanish anarchist, at the hands of the Spanish authorities Ferrer had been the founder of what has come to be known in Europe as the "modern school," of which the freedom of the individual was the cardinal tenet and it approached the assimilation of knowledge from a new angle. It proceeded on the assumption that you should learn only the things you wished to learn but also that you would assuredly wish to learn almost everything if you only had your curiosity scientifically awakened; that you would even learn revolutionary doctrine, which you forthwith proceeded to do.

So became established the Ferrer Modern School in New York, where children can do all those unusual things mentioned and which proceeds on the assumption, like its parent school of Europe, that education as sedulously practised since its inception has been completely wrong and that the Ferrer school's mission is to make it absolutely right.

It bases its first criticism of the conventional, tried for generations education of our own upon the instincts, which sounds profound but isn't nearly so terrifying when the school of the upside down has explained it all to you. Thus the instincts involved in the production of happiness, it carefully explains, are four: The instinct to live, to learn, to mate and to associate. Then the professor perseveringly takes them up one by one to prove that with regard to them utter freedom is really the only thing one should consider. Why does a child want to move about and whisper in school? Because enforced inactivity is opposed to health and therefore to the law of self-preservation, answers triumphantly the official of the modern school, who therefore concludes that it is better to let 'em whisper, or shout if they want to.

More important still to self-preservation is the instinct of curiosity. So when your unsophisticated child lights a match it learns not unpainfully that fire is dangerous. This is where Mr. Durant, the principal of the modern school, gets his second broadside in on the usual educational system.

It stifles curiosity, which should be really so sedulously nourished, he declares. Children must only ask questions about some topic in hand, when it is their nature to be simply teeming with questions about every little object which happens to exist under the sun. Children mustn't be allowed to digress under the old order of things, when in reality they should rightly gather their knowledge through their liking for digression. So repressed, says the modern school official, the child doesn't learn so much as if its curiosity were gratified.

Why does Jonesy pass a note to Bill in school? Why does he kick Sam's foot? Because Jonesy experiences the need of social communication, an inherited instinct which should be made to aid education, but which the old system of education stamps on.

So Mr. Durant sums up that as these repressions are inconsistent with the happiness of the child, and as the happiness of the child is essential to its proper development of character, which is the whole goal of education, these old methods must go. A brighter era must be introduced when the free play of instincts is to be the campaign issue, so to speak.

So that is why, at the Ferrer school, if Oscar comes at 8 o'clock, as he sometimes does, and Reon comes at 9:30 and Magda comes at 10, the facts do not occasion comment. It is the free play of the instinct for something or another. And that is why if in the blank exercise books which are presented to the pupils, no problems are solved or no pencil marks achieved by the end of the day, no critical comment is made or no punishment offered by the teacher, who concedes himself to be a teacher and not a master. It is the play of that immutable instinct again, which the disciples of the modern school claim to be more important to character than mere sums.

So follows naturally the whole sequence of processes which make the Ferrer school a topsy-turvy school, a school like no other school was before it, with method employed by no schools in the history of schools. So follows the amazing enough practice that spelling is not taught at all in this curriculum, where everything is rational.

Letters themselves are conceded but as a mere code; but words? They are learned from reading, stoutly contend the teachers of this revolutionary school—not from spelling books. What proportion of your own word knowledge comes to you from the spelling book? they ask.

And if you can learn spelling instinctively why not other things? Grammar, for instance, which the Ferrer school condemns and figuratively spits upon.

"We have no grammar lessons, yet the pupils learn grammar all the time," says Manuel Komroff, another of the teachers. "They assimilate grammar as they assimilated speech in the first place—by unconscious imitation. It is the free way, the rationalistic way. It is Nature's way."

That is why also, in this libertarian school, as its friends call it, there is no discipline, a thing despised by principal and colleagues alike. For discipline means repression, and the spirit of the particular sort of modernism for which Ferrer stood was utter freedom. So the libertarian pedagogue has to get along as well as he can without it.

At the first, says the principal, the children were unused to liberty and liberty was abused. They had never been in a school in which they had been allowed to talk, to sit or to stand where they chose, to read or write or play as they wished, and now that the strange freedom was given them there came times when the talking interfered with a lesson, or the play became too rough. Did the libertarian principle break down? Not at all. Two weeks of patient reasoning differentiated between liberty and tyranny.

A pen picture of the modern school is interesting, as drawn by one of its friends. No one isiin what the orthodox schoolmaster would call his place. One boy has a confiding arm linked within his teacher's; a couple of girls are setting upon a table, a third sprawls in a chair.

"Listen, friends," says the teacher amiably, answering questions about a picture on the wall.

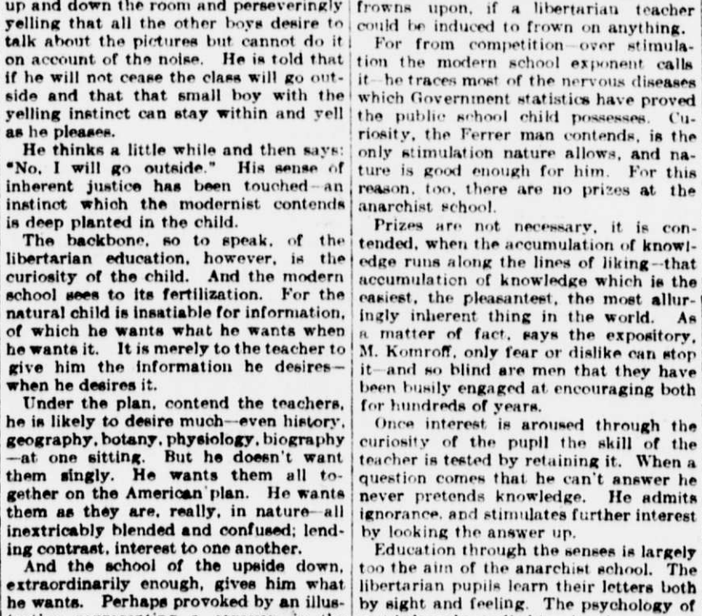
He tells a small boy who is running up and down the room and perseveringly yelling that all the other boys desire to talk about the pictures but cannot do it on account of the noise. He is told that if he will not cease the class will go outside and that that small boy with the yelling instinct can stay within and yell as he pleases.

He thinks a little while and then says: "No, I will go outside." His sense of inherent justice has been touched—an instinct which the modernist contends is deep planted in the child.

The backbone, so to speak, of the libertarian education, however, is the curiosity of the child. And the modern school sees to its fertilization. For the natural child is insatiable for information, of which he wants what he wants when he wants it. It is merely to the teacher to give him the information he desires—when he desires it.

Under the plan, contend the teachers, he is likely to desire much—even history, geography, botany, physiology, biography—at one sitting. But he doesn't want them singly. He wants them all together on the American plan. He wants them as they are, really, in nature—all inextricably blended and confused; lending contrast, interest to one another.

And the school of the upside down, extraordinarily enough, gives him what he wants. Perhaps provoked by an illustration representing a caravan in the desert, a pupil asks a question about



ALL AT ONE TIME--INTELLECTUAL NUTRIMENT ON LIBERTARIAN PLAN.

deserts—the Sahara perhaps. The class starts off by being one of geography. Books, encyclopædias, the atlas and the globe are consulted. Curiosity as to a specifically ferocious Arab horseman leads to a history of races, to the theory of evolution, possibly to the theory of chieftainship and kingship, from which one easily comes to a consideration of forms of government.

A kingdom is described by a teacher as a state which passes down from father to son. Then the contrast of a republican form of government becomes immediately manifest. The little class, or such portions of it as don't prefer something else, have been launched on a maelstrom of facts which have touched many sides of human knowledge. They have been happily engaged on a history geography physiology political economy lesson rolled into one.

They are dexterously steered to a conception of the comparative relation of each subject to the other by their libertarian teacher, who, however, would need to be an anarchistic Admiral Crichton. Perhaps Lincoln's head on a cent would be the forerunner of civil war reminiscences, even in the extempore dramatic representation in scenes of thrilling event in which the school is wont to indulge.

But whatever it is, if history for the moment is under consideration it will be likely to go back, not forward. That is the natural way, Mr. Komroff claims, even if it is the upside down way. If it is chemistry it will come from the boys to the teacher—from the inside looking out—but it won't be chemistry by name. The modern school shudders at names which are the original refrigeration plants to the meat of knowledge.

"The knowledge without the name should be the aim of the education," said one teacher who possessed the aim. "For information should run along the line of liking, which is arrived at by a simple stimulation of curiosity."

This curiosity, however, has led to peculiar results among the pupils in this strange school, results as curious as the underlying principles which constitute the school itself. The teaching has induced a tremendous practical knowledge, of real things if one believes the teachers, and, too, a corresponding impatience of the unreal.

What would you say to a school that derided Alice in Wonderland as unreal and so unworthy of consideration? Remarkable? Perhaps, but it is the pupils of the topsy turvy school again. Their wide questioning regarding real things has developed a remarkable practicality in each of the pupils.

They see Alice as merely a vapid and unscientific absurdity not worth the while. Her fascination is a dumb thing to them, who look outward and ask questions about the world, questions as to the million and one wonderlands all more wonderful than Alice's.

But always questions, questions, questions. "Why?" and "How do you know?" are foremost in their mouths, for to the anarchist school the "development of the why" is nature's method of giving an education. The idea of competition is something else which the libertarian frowns upon, if a libertarian teacher could be induced to frown on anything.

For from competition—over stimulation the modern school exponent calls it—he traces most of the nervous diseases which Government statistics have proved the public school child possesses. Curiosity, the Ferrer man contends, is the only stimulation nature allows, and nature is good enough for him. For this reason, too, there are no prizes at the anarchist school.

Prizes are not necessary, it is contended, when the accumulation of knowledge runs along the lines of liking—that accumulation of knowledge which is the easiest, the pleasantest, the most alluringly inherent thing in the world. As a matter of fact, says the expository, M. Komroff, only fear or dislike can stop it—and so blind are men that they have been busily engaged at encouraging both for hundreds of years.

Once interest is aroused through the curiosity of the pupil the skill of the teacher is tested by retaining it. When a question comes that he can't answer he never pretends knowledge. He admits ignorance, and stimulates further interest by looking the answer up.

Education through the senses is largely too the aim of the anarchist school. The libertarian pupils learn their letters both by sight and feeling. The psychology of rest is largely studied too by the unusual teachers, and this is arrived at through the pupils themselves. No intelligent young potential revolutionist would think of going from writing to reading because practically the same muscles are brought into play, but if he has been writing for a while, present him with a saw and a normal piece of wood and watch him occupy himself with the problems of carpentering!

It is the natural contrast of activities which in nature and the libertarian school make for development and rest, say its teachers. It's the sort of thing they don't consider in the ordinary system.

Such roughly is the constitution of the somewhat different school, where the pupils do nothing that any other pupils do and most things that other pupils fail to do. What if they refuse to learn? you ask, mindful of the fact that no pupil needs to learn if he doesn't wish to, that under no circumstances will he ever, ever be punished, and that he needn't even peep into the school unless he so desires.

"What if they don't learn?" repeats Mr. Komroff. "There is no child born to whom it is not natural to learn. You might as well say 'but what if a child won't eat ice cream?' There is no such thing as a child not wanting to eat it, or at least if he doesn't want ice cream he wants pie.

"You as a teacher must simply find out whether it is pie or ice cream that he wants. Find out his liking, watch him and when he asks—that's the time."

Such is the Ferrer Modern School, which its teachers deny is anarchist, while themselves mostly admitting to a philosophic anarchy. They, however, stoutly deny that they influence politically the minds of their pupils.

"We present certain facts and allow the children to draw logical inference" is the way it is put, though there is little doubt that the Ferrer system of inoculating children with advanced tendencies is successful.

The names of well known Socialists, however, form part of the advisory committee. If, though, you care to take the chance and your little Willie is highly desirous of attending a school where they'll absolutely let him do as he likes and permit him to put in an appearance whenever he wishes, and go out fishing whenever he wants to and do all the other wonderful things that have been recorded here, the Francisco Modern School, in which anarchism is not taught, will be glad to take Willie in without fee upon his or your part and teach him the way it thinks he ought to go.

But when he grows up it is pretty sure that Willie will not vote either the Republican or the Democratic ticket.

SULLIVAN COUNTY'S WONDERFUL NATURE FAKER

I wanted some one who was acquainted with the country to drive me over to a creek five miles from where I was quartered in Sullivan county, as I was told the trout fishing was better than ordinary there, so my landlord furnished me with a robust and willing looking native who he said would fill the bill.

"An' he kin give you more than a lot o' interestin' p'ints about things as you pass along," said he.

So I put myself in charge of the robust and willing looking native and we passed along. We had not gone far before he said to me:

"It's amazin' queer that none o' you fellers that comes up here fer fishin' don't never go an' have a tussle with them Roarin Mill Pond picker'l. Trout? Poof! Trout ag'in them picker'l is like sody water 'longaside o' applejack!"

This was a powerful assertion as to the capability of Roaring Mill Pond pickerel, and I admitted as much to their eulogist.

"It's a good hoss-power fact, jest the same!" he declared. "An' speakin' o' them picker'l, I took in a side splittin' little circus up to Roarin' Mill Pond only t'other day. You've heerd, o' course, that we've got bear in these parts quite consider'ble?"

Yes, I had. Everybody had heard that, I said.

"Yes," said the native, and I saw plainly that he was bent on revealing some of the "p'ints" referred to by the landlord. "An' they've been more'n toler'ble numerous this season so fur, an' there was news last week that if any one wanted to ketch, kill or claw an interestin' family of 'em all he had to do was to go up the creek a mile or two an' he'd find 'em.

"Some said there was nine of 'em, an' some said there was more'n ten, but Jess Crockett said that from the way they had come down one night an' dug up more'n an acre o' his 'taters there must 'a' been a drove of 'em enough to fill a pastur' lot. Now folks lies quite a good bit up that way, an' as fur as I could git the reearns I had jest as good a reason to believe there was a hunderd bears in the family as I had to believe there wasn't more'n one. Not bein' p'tic'lly busy, though, I concluded to shoulder my gun an' mosey up the creek an' take my chances.

"I went three mile up the creek, an' found the country as quiet as to bear as though it had been raked with a fine tooth comb, till I met Sam Barnes, who told me he had heerd there was a bear or two loafin' round the head o' Roarin' Mill Pond. It was quite a ja'nt to the mill pond, but as Sam was countin' on me gittin' him a job o' teamin' that he was hankerin' after, I didn't think it likely that he'd care to rile me by lyin' to me, an' so I took his tip an' clum fer Roarin' Mill Pond.

"As I was passin' along up one side o' the pond, to'rds the head of it, I seen somethin' comin' fer the shore, an' the way it was cuttin' the water an' makin' it fly I knowed to wunst that it wanted that shore tremendous bad. I stopped to see what could be ailin' o' the critter, an' then I see that it was a snappin' torkle, an' a snappin' torkle you couldn't 'a' squeezed into a sap bucket. Its eyes was hangin' 'most out on to its cheeks, an' I knowed that when a snappin' torkle, which is a critter that kin lick a bulldog so quick the dog won't know what happened to it, was as skeert as that the thing that skeert it must sartin be overpowerin' sassy an' no mistake.

"The torkle got to the shore an' was climbin' out when it come to a stop with a jerk, an' I see what ailed it. One o' them Roarin' Mill Pond picker'l was in its wake an' had ketched it by the tail. The snappin' torkle stuck its claws into the sand an' tugged to break loose, but it wa'n't no use, an' if I hadn't been there back into the water it'd been drug by the picker'l, an' its days 'd been numbered.

"But I seen the picker'l's head, an' though it give me a skeer that made my hand unstiddy I was on the p'int o' sockin' a bullet into it, when the rampagin' fish see me an' what I was goin' to do, an' it give a hump forw'rds, grabbed the torkle's tail close to the shell, bit it off with one nip o' its jaws an' back into the deep water it splashed, throwin' it up like a surgin' wave. The last I seen o' the snappin' torkle he was diggin' fer the woods, lookin' back over his shoulder now an' then, as if he expected as much as could be to see that picker'l a-follerin' of his trail.

"Then I went on to see about them bears Sam Barnes said he had heerd about. The head o' Roarin' Mill Pond is narrow, an' a big hemlock log lays clear acrost it, half sunk in the water. When I got in sight o' that log, there, sure enough, laid an old bear flat on the log, an' close behind her was a cub—a this year's cub, an' a toler'ble good sized one fer its age.

"'What in gum blazes is them bears up to?' says I, stoppin' to look at 'em.

"The log was about five rod away from where I was standin', an' I sneaked round through the bushes till I got within twenty foot of it, an' found a good place to look out from an' study what the bear an' her youngster was doin'. The cub was plastered flat to the log, same as its mammy was. I hadn't looked long 'fore I noticed that the old bear had one of her fore paws down in the water, 'longside o' the log.

"'There's somethin' new to me goin' on here,' says I, an' I waited to see what it could be.

"I hadn't waited more'n twenty seconds when the old bear jerked her paw up out o' the water with a swish, an' hangin' to a couple of her claws was a shiner, five or six inches long!

"'Why!' I says. 'The consarned bear's a-fishin', sure as gnats a-bitin'!'

"That's what she was doin'—anglin'; usin' her crooked, sharp toe nails fer fish-hooks, an' anglin'! That was a stunner fer me, but after the old bear had took the shiners off of her hooks an' divided 'em with her cub, she done somethin' that stunned me a heap sight more.

"I had noticed that there was quite a deep hole scooped out o' the log, jest ahead o' the old bear, but o' course hadn't thort nothin' about it more'n common till I see the bear paw in the hole an' pull out a fish worm—a real, live, up-an'-up wriggler of a fish worm. She tore the worm to bits, an' baited every blame toe nail on her other paw with 'em, an' stuck that paw down in the water ag'in! The hole in the log was her bait box, an' the long an' short o' the hull business was that she was out fer a day's fishin', as proper an' undoubted as huckleberry pie.

"'I'm-glad it's me that sees this!' says I, 'fer if any o' them folks along the creek had told o' seein' it nobody would 'a' believed 'em!'

"I could diskiver when the bear was gittin' a bite jest as easy as if it had been me a-fishin' myself, fer she'd kind o' motion with her hind foot to her cub fer it to keep quiet an' lay low an' she'd let the leg she was fishin' with run out as fur as it could, jest like she was givin' the fish line. Then she'd give a sudden jerk, an' every time she'd pull up she'd have a shiner on two or three of her hooks.

"'Shoot that bear?' says I. 'Well, if I do,' says I, 'it won't be long 'fore my conscience 'll make me give myself up to be tried, an' when they ask me what fer I'll have to tell 'em that it's fer murderin' a fisherman an' to take me out an' hang me.'

"So I kep' on peekin' through the bushes at the bear a-fishin', an' I believe I'd 'a' stayed there till now if somethin' hadn't happened. After the old bear had pulled up a dozen times or more an' landed her fish I noticed that the cub begun to git kind o' uneasy an' looked wishful like every time its mammy 'd bait up an' throw in. Then by an' by jest after the old bear had handed the cub two or three shiners out of a ketch an' went to fishin' ag'in I see the cub slyly hook one o' the shiners onto one of its little toenails an' slip its little paw down in the water an' troll the shiner as fur as the len'th o' line 'd let him.

"'Well, now I will be gumbusted!' says I. 'That cub has gone its mammy one better an' is fishin' with live bait! When that cub grows up,' I says, 'he'll have to have a split bamboo fly rod an' all the trimmin's, an' if I kin only keep track of him,' I says, 'I'll be the one that'll go ten mile to buy 'em fer him!'

"But at that p'int somethin' happened that interfered consider'ble with the plans I had laid out fer that young bear's future. There come a swoop an' a swash alongside the log that throwed the water up three foot. The next second off o' that log went the cub like a shot, an' the last thing I see of him was a blubber in the water where he went under.

"The cub's mammy hadn't knowed nothin' about its takin' a sly hand in the fishin', but when she heerd the swoop an' the swash an' looked round an' see her baby goin' in the pond like a stone she must 'a' s'pected it, fer she riz up an' give one heart rendin' howl, beat her chist three or four times with her paws an' went off to the woods a-moanin' an' a-cryin' too tetchin' to tell about.

"That bereaved old bear had sartin heerd o' them Roarin' Mill Pond picker'l an' knowed it wa'n't no use to think o' gittin' her unfortnit cub back ag'in."

The look on my face must have spoken what was on my mind, for the robust and willing native went right on and said:

"Certainly. That was what it was. The cub had meant well enough, an' fur beyend his years, when he started in to fish with live bait in that pond, but he didn't know them Roarin' Mill Pond picker'l. Trout? Poof! Though the road ain't pooty good, it's only nineteen mile to Roarin' Mill Pond, an' if you'd like a tussle I'll——"

But I said I'd try the trout and let it go at that; and it didn't seem to me that the native showed much disappointment over it.

CASTING CANDY TOYS

About now is the time when candy manufacturers begin casting candy toys for the holiday trade, those various figures of hard, transparent candy that have been so long familiar.

The season for the manufacture and sale of these goods now lasts annually for four months, from September to December. Fifty years ago these hard candy figures which young folks so much fancy were likely to be given to the children at Christmas only, along with their other Christmas gifts, but in later years they have come to be used as well for gifts at fairs and festivals, and so their season has been extended, but the toys themselves remain in the same old time forms in which they have been handed down through generation after generation. It is doubtful if the children would like to see them changed.

There are still made the same familiar candy horses and candy dogs and boats and flower pots and houses and fishes and cats and rabbits and men, all just as before, and now as ever the little children to whom these figures come stand them up to see if they will stand alone and then in due time they pick up a candy horse and bite off its head, and then finally they eat the rest of it, all just as they have always done and they like them as much as ever.

But while these candy toys in their shapes remain the same there have been some changes in the details of their manufacture In old times they were made in just two colors, red and yellow, and with perhaps two flavors, lemon and wintergreen, whereas now they are turned out in many separate colors or tints and in many flavors. Here, for instance, is one candy manufacturer who makes these toys in twenty or more different shapes and each one in nine separate colors and in nine separate flavors.

They are cast in iron moulds. These goods are known as assorted clear toys and they are put up for the trade in boxes of five pounds and in pails of thirty pounds. Their production is started early to give time for distribution, and already the casting of these toys for the present season has begun. They are turned out annually in millions.